

I/WE CLAIM

1. A vending machine comprising:
 - a cabinet frame including top, bottom, side and rear walls that collectively define a central cavity;
 - a plurality of column walls defining various stack areas for receiving product containers to be dispensed from the vending machine;
 - a door pivotally connected to the cabinet frame, said door being selectively movable between an open condition, wherein access to the central cavity is permitted for loading of product containers into the various stack areas of the vending machine, and a closed condition, wherein dispensing of product containers is permitted;
 - a locking element attached to the door; and
 - a lock assembly including a main body and a lock member, said main body having a first end portion secured to the cabinet frame, a second end portion attached to one of the plurality of column walls, and an intermediate portion extending between the first and second end portions, with said intermediate portion being provided with a first opening, said lock member being interconnected to the main body and including a second opening which is aligned with the first opening, wherein the locking element on the door extends into each of the first and second openings and engages the lock member to secure the door in the closed condition so as to prevent pilfering of the vending machine.
2. The vending machine according to claim 1, wherein the lock assembly further includes a support bracket interconnecting the first end portion of the main body to the cabinet frame.

3. The vending machine according to claim 2, wherein the support bracket is detachably secured to the cabinet frame through a plurality of mechanical fasteners.
4. The vending machine according to claim 2, wherein support bracket is integrally formed with the main body.
5. The vending machine according to claim 4, wherein the support bracket is formed with at least one slot and said main body includes at least one tab element which extends into the at least one slot to interlock the support bracket and the main body.
6. The vending machine according to claim 5, wherein the support bracket is formed with at least two slots and said main body includes at least two tab elements interlocking the main body with the support bracket through the at least two slots.
7. The vending machine according to claim 1, wherein the main body is generally U-shaped in cross-section having first and second side walls interconnected by an intermediate wall, said first opening being provided in the intermediate wall.
8. The vending machine according to claim 7, wherein the intermediate wall and the first and second side walls collectively define a rear channel of the main body, said lock member being positioned in the channel.

9. The vending machine according to claim 8, wherein the lock member is loosely secured in the channel of the main body.
10. The vending machine according to claim 7, wherein the first opening takes the form of a slot.
11. The vending machine according to claim 7, wherein the intermediate wall of the main body includes a third opening and said lock member includes a fourth opening which is aligned with the third opening, said lock member being attached to the main body at the third and fourth openings.
12. The vending machine according to claim 11, wherein each of the second and fourth openings are internally threaded.
13. The vending machine according to claim 1, wherein the second end portion of the main body includes a mounting flange, said mounting flange being secured to said one of the plurality of column walls.
14. The vending machine according to claim 1, wherein the second end portion of the main body includes an extended tab member, said one of the plurality of column walls having a side surface including a slot, wherein the extended tab member extends into the slot to detachably secure the second end portion of the main body to the column wall.
15. A vending machine comprising:
a cabinet frame including top, bottom, side and rear walls that collectively define a central cavity;

a plurality of column walls defining various stack areas for receiving product containers to be dispensed from the vending machine;

a door pivotally connected to the cabinet frame, said door being selectively movable between an open condition, wherein access to the central cavity is permitted for loading of product containers into the various stack areas of the vending machine, and a closed condition, wherein dispensing of product containers is permitted;

a locking element attached to the door; and

a lock assembly including a main body and a lock member, the main body having first and second side walls interconnected by an intermediate wall, each of the first and second side walls and the intermediate wall defining part of first and second end portions of the main body, with each of the first and second end portions being secured to a respective one of the cabinet frame and the plurality of column walls, said intermediate wall and said first and second side walls collectively defining a channel of the main body, said lock member being positioned in the channel and attached to the main body, wherein the locking element on the door engages the lock member to secure the door in the closed condition so as to prevent pilfering of the vending machine.

16. The vending machine according to claim 15, wherein the lock assembly further includes a support bracket interconnecting the first end portion of the main body to the cabinet frame.

17. The vending machine according to claim 16, wherein the support bracket is detachably secured to the cabinet frame through a plurality of mechanical fasteners.

18. The vending machine according to claim 16, wherein support bracket is integrally formed with the main body.
19. The vending machine according to claim 18, wherein the support bracket is formed with at least one slot and said main body includes at least one tab element which extends into the at least one slot to interlock the support bracket and the main body.
20. The vending machine according to claim 19, wherein the support bracket is formed with at least two slots and said main body includes at least two tab elements interlocking the main body with the support bracket through the at least two slots.
21. The vending machine according to claim 15, wherein the main body is generally U-shaped in cross-section.
22. The vending machine according to claim 15, wherein the lock member is loosely secured in the channel of the main body.
23. The vending machine according to claim 15, wherein said intermediate wall is provided with a first opening, said lock member being interconnected to the main body and including a second opening which is aligned with the first opening, said lock element being adapted to extend into each of the first and second openings.
24. The vending machine according to claim 23, wherein the first opening takes the form of a slot.

25. The vending machine according to claim 23, wherein the intermediate wall of the main body includes a third opening and said lock member includes a fourth opening which is aligned with the third opening, said lock member being attached to the main body at the third and fourth openings.

26. The vending machine according to claim 25, wherein each of the second and fourth openings are internally threaded.

27. The vending machine according to claim 15, wherein the second end portion of the main body includes a mounting flange, said mounting flange being secured to said one of the plurality of column walls.

28. The vending machine according to claim 15, wherein the second end portion of the main body includes an extended tab member, said one of the plurality of column walls having a side surface including a slot, wherein the extended tab member extends into the slot to detachably secure the second end portion of the main body to the column wall.

29. A method of locking a main door of a vending machine comprising:

securing a first end portion of a main lock body, including first and second side walls interconnected by an intermediate wall that collectively define a channel, to a column wall arranged in the vending machine;

securing a second end portion of the main lock body to a cabinet frame of the vending machine such that the main lock body spans between the column wall and the cabinet frame while being supported at each of the first and second end portions;

locating a lock member in the channel of the main lock body; and
threadably attaching a lock element carried by the door of the
vending machine with the lock member, with the lock element extending
through the main body.

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising: permitting the lock
member to move within the channel.